Order of the Ascension

THE ORDER OF THE ASCENSION

Mission

The Order of the Ascension is envisioned as an Anglican community of mission priests, Companions and Associates. The Order seeks to give expression to the mission of the Church ("to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ") by serving Episcopal parishes in effective and faithful oversight and ministry. We see ourselves serving those parishes with two or more of the following characteristics:

- located in poor, minority, and/or "blue collar" areas, especially urban;
- small;
- with a history of instability in clergy oversight and pastoral care; and/or having current difficulty securing competent, stable clergy oversight and ministry;
- desiring leadership in the renewal and development of the parish.

Membership: Members, Companions and Associates

The Order is presently in the process of development. We see this initial period as lasting approximately two years. We are moving toward a commitment of professed members which finds its expression in three year vows of obedience, stability of life, and financial interdependence (a spirit of apostolic poverty). Members may be single or married. All members have or will receive extensive training in parish development and oversight. We intend to provide a strong pattern of continuing education related to our mission.

It is not our intention to live a common life in a residential community. However, we will maintain a form of common life appropriate to our mission, through regular gatherings during the year. The yearly schedule will include chapter meetings, retreat and a common vacation. Members who live in geographical proximity will gather on a regular basis for worship and study. As appropriate, Companions and Associates will share in the life and work of the Order.

Companions of the Order of the Ascension are priests, laity, deacons, and bishops who commit themselves to three year periods of an especially close relationship to the Order's work. They engage in a ministry that is directly related to the mission of the Order and is explicitly affirmed by the Order as an expression of its work. Companions receive special training and are intimately involved in the Order's life through prayer, study, and work.

Associates are laity, bishops, priests, and deacons who participate in the Order's life through prayer, study, and Christian action. Associates live within a rule of life that is rooted in the threefold rule of prayer (Holy Eucharist, Daily Office, personal devotions) and in the Anglican tradition's expression of the Christian life in worship, doctrine, and action.

Orientation of the Order

The Order desires to live within and to advance Catholic Faith and practice as received in the Anglican tradition. This includes living within the Anglican pattern of worship, doctrine and action; making full use of the Book of Common Prayer, rooting our spiritual discipline in the threefold rule of prayer--Holy Eucharist, Daily Office and personal devotions; and conforming to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church. In our life as an Order and in our work in parishes, we want to further a strong and full living of the Christian life--in liturgy and service, evangelization and social justice, spiritual formation and parish fellowship.

Parish revitalization needs to be based upon the radical and practical application of the Catholic Faith to contemporary needs. We are committed to learning and developing approaches that use the traditional methods and resources of the Church, the disciplines of the behavioral sciences, and the experience of other Christian communions, in the development and oversight of parishes and in our life as an Order.

On the 7th and 8th of January 1983, eleven men and women gathered at St. Helena's Convent to give concrete expression to our desire to establish the Order of the Ascension. Those who gathered represented all three elements of the Order family --members, Companions, and Associates. Others have joined since that meeting.

Council of Advisors

As part of its development the Order has established a Council of Advisors. This is a body of bishops, priests and lay persons from several dioceses, who have agreed to pray for and consult with the Order as it is shaped during the next few years.

Available Resources

Part of the Order's mission is to provide training and vocational support for clergy and laity whose ministries relate closely to the aims of the Order, and consultative help to those responsible for mission strategy. A list of training and consultation offerings is available from Mrs. Mary L. Laney, COA, 175 9th Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

Ascension Press is a ministry of the Order, producing tools for parish development and oversight, consistent with the mission and general orientation of the Order. A publication list and order form may be obtained by writing Ascension Press, c/o The Rev. Alice B. Mann, OA, 360 Church Street, Yalesville, CT 06492.

For More Information

Persons interested in becoming Associates of the Order of the Ascension (AOA) may contact the Rev. Donald Graff, OA, Director of Associates, 3089 Emerald Street, Philadelphia, PA 19134. You will receive a copy of the Rule for Associates, which includes an application form.

Those interested in exploring full membership in the Order (OA) or in becoming a Companion (COA), should contact the Rev. Robert A. Gallagher, OA, 1335 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105.